

5	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
TennesseeBroadsheet Master Template_ Revised 11/01/00					TennesseeBroadsheet Master Template_ Revised 11/01/00					
5	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	5
TennesseeBroadsheet Master Template_ Revised 11/01/00					TennesseeBroadsheet Master Template_ Revised 11/01/00					
100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	5

Johnny Cash (1932 - 2003)

increased attention to spiritual matters, and Mr. Cash often spoke to audiences and interviewers about his Christian beliefs. He would later write a book about the Apostle Paul called *Man In White*.

By the late 1960s Mr. Cash was touring with an ensemble that included Perkins, members of the Carter Family and vocal group The Statler Brothers. Such a bevy of talent ensured audiences variety, and Mr. and Mrs. Cash kept just such a scene going at home by inviting musicians over to share stories and swap songs.

Mr. Cash maintained friendships with artists beyond the country world, and he and banjo innovator Earl Scruggs were two of the few prominent Nashville artists to mingle with politically left-leaning folk and pop musicians during this contentious time of civil rights unrest and war in Vietnam.

One friend of Mr. Cash's was Bob Dylan: They had kept up a correspondence since the early 1960s. Mr. Cash sang with Dylan on *Girl From the North Country*, the kickoff track to Dylan's 1969 *Nashville Skyline* album. Mr. Cash also contributed Grammy-winning liner notes to that album.

A difficult Far East tour in 1969 found Mr. Cash sometimes playing more than 10 shows a day for military troops in locales including Saigon, Vietnam. The stress of that tour wore on Mr. Cash and he went back to pill-popping.

"My liberation from drug addiction wasn't permanent," he would later write. "Though I never regressed to spending years at a time on amphetamines, I've used mood-altering drugs for periods of varying length at various times since 1967: amphetamines, sleeping pills and prescription painkillers."

In February 1969 Mr. Cash again made an album at a penitentiary. This time it was San Quentin, where he had previously visited three times. He had written a song called *San Quentin* for the occasion.

"San Quentin, may you rot and burn in hell," he sang, and inmates shouted a dangerous-sounding mix of appreciation and unleashed anguish. Mr. Cash would often later remark that the scene was barely controlled, and that if he had shouted, "Break!" the prisoners would have rioted.

Both *San Quentin* and *Folsom Prison Blues* were written in a first-person narrative that led many listeners to assume Mr. Cash himself had been to prison. He had not, though he spent a little time in jail on minor charges.

A *Boy Named Sue*, a Shel Silverstein-penned song recorded that night, was the biggest hit from the *At San Quentin* album. It was a five-week No. 1 country hit and it won the Country Music Association's single of the year prize.

June 1969 brought *At San Quentin*'s release, and it marked the beginning of ABC-TV's *The Johnny Cash Show*. Mr. Cash recorded most of the show's 56 episodes at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium, and he insisted that guest performers would include then-controversial artists including Dylan, Pete Seeger and Arlo Guthrie. The atypical blend of country, rock, folk and jazz was intended to spotlight conjunctions, not collisions, and the program helped broaden Mr. Cash's fame among those who hadn't listened to country music.

Mr. Cash would sell more than 6 million records in 1969, making it the most successful year of his career. Vietnam was raging, Richard Nixon was president and Johnny Cash, a 37-year-old native of Kingsland, Ark., was bigger than The Beatles.

Chapter 4: A Fall

By the turn of the decade, Mr. Cash's music had become a meeting ground for formerly disconnected camps.

"I wondered how it was possible for a man to maintain constituencies in the widely separated countries of Bob Dylan and Billy Graham," wrote journalist Dorothy Gallagher, who profiled Mr. Cash during this period.

Mr. Cash's biggest 1970 hits were an indication of his expansive musical vision. He and Mrs. Cash made it to No. 2 on the *Billboard* country chart with folkie Tim Hardin's *If I Were A Carpenter* (for which the Cashes won a



Glen Campbell, left, was a guest of Johnny Cash for a taping of *The Johnny Cash Show*.

Grammy), and Mr. Cash scored a No. 3 hit with *What Is Truth*.

"This whole world's waking to a brand new day, and I solemnly swear it's gonna be their way," sang Mr. Cash. "Can you blame the voice of youth for asking, 'What is truth?'"

He released two No. 1 hits in 1970: One was a version of Kris Kristofferson's *Sunday Morning Coming Down*, an empathetic portrait of an addict. The other smash, which peaked in early 1971, was the folksy love song *Flesh And Blood*.

On March 3, 1970, Mrs. Cash gave birth to a boy, John Carter Cash. Six weeks later, Mr. Cash performed at the White House in front of President Nixon. While a Nixon aide told Mr. Cash that the president would like to hear him sing two right-wing country numbers — Guy Drake's *Welfare Cadillac* and Merle Haggard's *Okie From Muskogee* — the singer opted to sing gospel songs and some of his own material.

March 1971 also marked the final taping of *The Johnny Cash Show*, which was canceled amid growing dissension between the star and ABC. Mr. Cash fought for more creative control and the network grew tired of fighting about a show that was not drawing enough viewers.

His *Man In Black* single, which found Mr. Cash claiming that he would wear his signature black stage outfits as a somber nod to the needy, hungry, imprisoned, addicted and enlisted, also charted top 5.

By the end of 1971, he and Mrs. Cash had traveled to Tel Aviv, Israel, to film *The Gospel Road*, a movie about the life of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Cash was now a filmmaker, a father, a husband, a songwriter, a touring attraction, a celebrity and many other things. His recording career was stretched thin by his other interests, and he would not notch another No. 1 hit until 1976.

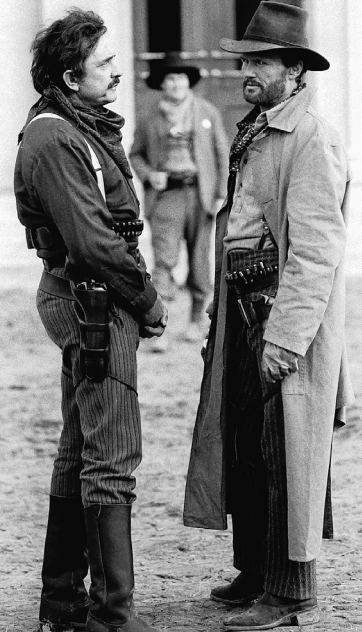
As Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings and others turned heads and ears with a vigorous sound that signaled the onset of so-called Outlaw Movement, Mr. Cash made a series of middle-of-the-road albums that seldom rated mention alongside '50s and '60s triumphs.

Though not at his artistic peak, Mr. Cash was still Nashville's greatest superstar, an auditorium-packing concert draw, a sure-bet Country Music Hall of Famer (he would become the youngest-ever inductee in 1980) and a celebrity whose views on social issues were widely sought. The 1975 autobiography *Man In Black* detailed a rise to fame, numerous falls to drugs and an eventual acceptance of sobriety, marriage and godliness. The book furthered his already substantial fame.

"Since the late '60s, Cash's records have been rather strange — more the recorded evidence of a great artist floundering in confusion than the masterful products of Cash's own unique mold," wrote *Country Music* magazine's Patrick Carr.

1976's *One Piece At A Time* was a welcome return to a stripped-down sound reminiscent of Mr. Cash's 1950s work. The song became Mr. Cash's final No. 1 country hit as a solo artist. After that, the only time Mr. Cash's voice appeared on a top-charting country radio single was in 1985, as a member of supergroup The Highwaymen, with Jennings, Nelson and Kris Kristofferson.

Drugs maintained a pull on Mr. Cash. One early-1980s downturn occurred after one of his own



RICKY ROGERS / TENNESSEAN FILE

Johnny Cash, left, starred with Kris Kristofferson on the NBC movie, *The Return of Frank and Jesse James*.

ostriches attacked him. The Cashes kept an exotic animal park near their Old Hickory Lake home. Mr. Cash suffered five broken ribs, painkillers were prescribed and the cycle of addiction began again.

Mr. Cash would later surmise that some level of self-loathing was involved in all of the substance abuse. Even as fans and fellow musicians celebrated his accomplishments, even with unending devotion from his wife, he was unable to make peace with himself. In 1984, he entered the Betty Ford Center and was treated for addiction to morphine.

The lowest point in Mr. Cash's career may have come that same year when he failed to make the country Top 40 with an ill-conceived novelty song called *Chicken in Black*. In later interviews, he would call it "an embarrassment."

Columbia Records did not promote Mr. Cash's 1980s material with much fervor, though the company was quite good at selling the smart and sultry, cutting-edge recordings of his singing, songwriting daughter, Rosanne. Mr. Cash was proud and supportive, though he could not have failed to notice that not only was he no longer bigger than The Beatles, but he also was not even the top-charting Cash.

Columbia Records released Mr. Cash from his contract in 1986, creating an uproar among Cash devotees such as young gun Dwight Yoakam. It seemed logical enough to Mr. Cash, who had been unhappy with Columbia's lack of promotion since his 1977 concept album, *The Rambler*. He also knew that he'd done some damage to his commercial viability with material like *Chicken in Black*.

Mr. Cash secured a deal with Mercury/Polygram and recorded some excellent material (*Beans For Breakfast*, *Last of the Drifters* and a version of Guy Clark's *Let Him Roll*), but with the dawn of the 1990s, he was considering an exodus from recording.

"Saying goodbye to that game and just working the road, playing with my friends and family for people who really wanted to hear us, seemed very much like the thing to do," he wrote in *Cash*.

Chapter 5: Rising Again

In 1992, Mr. Cash was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, an honor that



RICKY ROGERS / TENNESSEAN FILE

Johnny Cash, performing with wife, June Carter Cash, at the CBS Records Show during Fan Fair at the Tennessee State Fairgrounds in 1982.



RICKY ROGERS / TENNESSEAN FILE

Johnny Cash, middle, was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1980 during the Country Music Association Awards Show at the Grand Ole Opry House. At left is Barbara Mandrell, at right is Mac Davis.

reminded many of his spare-ably work on Sun Records with independent-minded producer Sam Phillips.

A year later, another independent-minded maverick — long-haired Rick Rubin, known for his work with rap and hard rock acts — would sign Mr. Cash to a record deal with American Recordings, setting into motion a rise back to contemporary viability.

Here was the so-simple-it's-brilliant idea, as supported by the man who had produced the Beastie Boys and Public Enemy: Record Johnny Cash unadorned, strumming an acoustic guitar with his thumb and singing.

Even before the world at large was able to hear the solo/acoustic album called *American Recordings*, Mr. Cash's credibility was rising. The association with Rubin quickly hoisted the Man in Black from creative quicksand, and his

reinvigorated spirit caught on with young hipsters.

The Viper Room on the Sunset Strip in Los Angeles provided a still talked-about "coming back out" party. There, Mr. Cash sang for a crowd packed with rock singers and movie stars.

"It was really a magical event," Rubin told writer Nick Tosches. "It's odd to be in a place like the Viper Room, which is kind of a small but loud nightclub, and have it be so quiet. It's nothing that you could imagine happening, that kind of silence and awe in an audience in that particular kind of place."

Noticing the age disparity between performer and audience at a 1994 Austin concert, Mr. Cash told the crowd, "I hope you enjoy the show, grandchildren."

In April 1994, *American Recordings* was released. Two recordings from the Viper Room show were included. Response was nearly

universally positive, with *Time* magazine's review proclaiming: "He has reasserted himself as one of the greats of popular music."

Mr. Cash also was pleased, saying, "I think I'm more proud of it than anything I've ever done in my life. This is me. Whatever I've got to offer as an artist, it's here."

While *American Recordings* did not sell in astounding numbers, it did reawaken an interest in Mr. Cash's music and expand his audience. *American Recordings* made it to No. 23 on the country charts, making it the highest-charting of Mr. Cash's solo albums.

The album won a Grammy award for best contemporary folk album, and spawned a video for *Delia's Gone* that was played on MTV. After years of creative and commercial decline, Mr. Cash was cool again. Even as country radio ignored the revitalization, Mr. Cash regained a foothold in the rock 'n' roll world. He

1980s

(Continued from previous page)

1980: Inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

1985: Working

with Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and Kris Kristofferson, Mr. Cash tops the Billboard chart with *Highwayman*. Mr. Cash publishes *Man In White*, a novel about the life of Paul the Apostle.

1986: Mr. Cash is dropped from Columbia Records.

1987: Shares a best spoken word Grammy with Roy Orbison, Sam Phillips, Rick Nelson and Roy Orbison for *Interviews from the Class of*

'55. Releases his first album on the Mercury label: *Johnny Cash Is Coming To Town*. Rosanne Cash's version of Cash's 1961 single, *Tennessee Flat Top Box*, arrives on the country charts in

November. It eventually makes it to No. 1.

1988: Mr. Cash undergoes a double-bypass operation, contracts pneumonia and is put on life support at Baptist Hospital. Three months later,

he is back on the road.

1990s

1990: Receives Academy of Country Music Association's Pioneer Award.

1992: Inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Receives Grammy Legend Award.

1993: Mr. Cash guests on U2's album, *The Wanderer*. Signs with Rick Rubin's Ameri-

can Recordings label.

1994: Releases the solo/acoustic *American Recordings*, which becomes the highest-charting Cash album in a decade-and-a-half.

1995: *American Recordings* wins Grammy for best contemporary folk album.

1996: Honored at the Kennedy Center awards in Washington, D.C. Releases

*Unchained*.

1997: Releases a second autobiography, called *Cash*.

(Continued on next page)